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SUBJECT: INDIAN UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CANDIDATE THAROOR

¶1. On August 28, Ambassador Tichenor met with Shashi Tharoor, India's candidate for UN Secretary-General, during a dinner hosted by Indian PermRep Singh. Tharoor reviewed themes outlined in his September 4 Newsweek editorial, discussing with the Ambassador and other Geneva-based PermReps his vision for leading the United Nations in the 21st century by further promoting democracy, prioritizing and streamlining UN programs, closing the "North-South" divide at the UN, and strengthening the international civil service. Speaking on Security Council peacekeeping missions, Tharoor said that they needed clear mandates, proper review, and the political will to implement them. When asked his views on what advantages an insider would bring to the UNSYG job, Tharoor responded that "while a new broom sweeps clean, an old broom knows where to sweep," suggesting his insider status made him the strongest candidate.

¶2. The Ambassador asked Tharoor, current UN Under Secretary for Communications and Public Information, about published accounts that UNIFIL forces in Lebanon telegraphed Israeli troop movements. Tharoor said he was not aware of those accounts, but, if they were true, it would be a serious matter and such information was to be handled confidentially and professionally.

¶3. Comment: Tharoor appeared smart, capable, and strongly self-deferential. The U.S. decision to support the strongest candidate, regardless of his national origin, definitely sets us apart from other UNSC members; at this dinner, the Chinese ambassador dryly noted that he would support the most qualified candidate, "as long as s/he was Asian." End comment.

TICHENOR